

Falcon Heights City Council Workshop
City Hall
2077 W Larpenteur Ave.
6:30 P.M.

MINUTES

Wednesday, May 3, 2017

1) Review and Discuss Task Force Recommendations Regarding Policing

Call to Order: 6:38pm

Presentation from Melanie Leehy, Task Force Co-Chair.

Reading of Letter to Council and Recommendations from the Task Force:

Kathy Quick, one of the Task Force Facilitators, spoke on the process of coming to these recommendations: 12 meetings (3-4 hours long), mutually respectful conversations, community conversations, and collaborations with the Conflict Resolution Center. They gathered feedback and walked through several rounds of edits and revisions. They worked to understand areas of disagreement. They also identified areas where they felt they did not have enough information. They set up panels with subject matter experts to gain some more knowledge. They worked through several drafts. They did not come to complete unity on all areas, but they were able to find consensus in what they are recommending.

The subject of policing issues cannot be void of the bigger issue and foundation of racial equity, diversity, and inclusion. This meeting is specific to policing issues and the recommendations that are being brought forward. They realize that this is a work in progress, and the recommendations are not all or nothing. Council Members can make modifications where they see fit. The Task Force wants to know what will be accepted of the recommendations, and what changes Council anticipates making.

Council Member Brown Thunder agrees with the majority of the recommendations that are being made, but he would also like to have further discussions with subject matter experts to gain even more insight.

Council Member Harris fully agrees with the Ownership piece of the recommendations. She believes that we are more vulnerable than we thought we would be. We are now to the point of seeking a new police department and we are walking a fine line with what those contenders have the capacity to implement into a contract

Council Member Fischer agrees with the majority of the recommendations, but he realizes it will take a lot of work to operationalize these details. He wants to know what those next steps would

be to carry these forward. He noted that there is a Community Engagement Commission that celebrates diversity and a Human Rights Day event. What more can we be doing?

There will be a report with more practical steps and suggestions of how these recommendations can be applied. These were gathered by the Task Force volunteers and through the Community Conversations. In the past, the Human Rights Commission included children in contests to write a human rights essay. We can seek to involve not only children in these discussions, but parents and families.

“Respect for Life” can be considered as recommendations for de-escalation training. The wording can allude to portraying political beliefs on death penalty and abortion, which is not the intention. This document is meant to address strategy and underlying themes. There will be more operational details to follow. Statements have been made that it boils down to “treat others how you want to be treated.”

Community-Police Commission:

In regards to ownership under the Police –Community Relationship aspect, how can the city implement having significant authority with the police department? The current contract does not allow for that, and there needs to be change. Engagement can involve connecting with the broader community and communities that surround us. The community engagement component recommended by the Task Force is more to recommend that the contracted police department hosts community-led and community-oriented trainings. It is recommended that they would also host workshops, specific to human rights and what residents rights are if they should encounter a situation involving police. Some of these concepts are already happening but this is an opportunity to make it stronger and be innovative. These interactions can also be mutual trainings with people groups and police officers.

One theme that came out in the months of work is that this has to be sustainable, with an attempt to not create additional overhead. Council Member Harris believes a Community-Police Commission will be a big hurdle to having any police department be interested. She also believes that this would be difficult to staff. Council Member Brown Thunder would like to review other cities who have implemented Community-Police Commissions. How would this be different than going directly to the police department? The purpose of this would be to review patterns, whether positive or negative. How would we appoint the right people to this type of commission without creating an anti-police group specifically looking for complaints or things that went wrong. If there were negative patterns, this is something that should be reviewed by the City Council.

One of the intentions of the Community-Police Commission would be to review when complaints are received and if they are tended to in a timely manner. This would be an improvement on the current model, which is waiting to hear about complaints that do not happen often.

Duluth is currently piloting a program with Social Workers to help assist in situations of crisis, whether involving mental health issues or chemical dependency issues. St. Anthony is looking into implementing another layer with Police Officers to have a chaplain on duty. There are two aspects to de-escalation, whether de-escalating the situation or having the police officers apply those techniques and skills to their own de-escalation.

Data and Transparency:

The current data cannot tangibly be extrapolated. There have been inquiries about obtaining new software but that is upwards of 1.5 million dollars. There are some new steps that have been put into place to allow for transparency in stops. This was recently put into action with the press release about the stop off Hamline.

Priorities for Policing Activity:

It is good to have a layout of the priorities in which police activity should be conducted, but there are some opinions from Council that there shouldn't be stipulations on when to give a warning. Police should have the expertise to know when something may escalate to no longer warrant a warning. Something to consider would be having a focus on policing in the neighborhoods versus on the county and state roads.

We do not want to be known as a community that really hones in on low-level crimes. A police officer can find probable cause at any time to pull someone over, but we want to instill the values of what is a priority and how police activity should be handled. Our choice for a police department isn't perfection versus St. Anthony. We should keep our options open.

There is a recommendation to speak to subject matter experts and to vet out a work plan as soon as possible. The Council will decide what is feasible to implement and how practical steps are to begin taking. Council will make a statement on what they can move forward on, what they are in favor of but need to wait to implement based on what police department is contracted, and what they will either need more information on or they are not in favor of.

Adjourn: 9:07pm

Peter Lindstrom, Mayor

Dated this 3rd day of May, 2017

Sack Thongvanh, City Administrator