

CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS
City Council Workshop
City Hall
2077 West Larpenteur Avenue

MINUTES
March 3, 2021
6:30 P.M.

NOTE: THIS MEETING WAS HELD BY WEB CONFERENCE

- A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:39 PM
- B. ROLL CALL: ANDREWS X GUSTAFSON X LEEHY X
MIAZGA X WEHYEE X
- STAFF PRESENT: THONGVANH X
- C. PRESENTATIONS:
- D. POLICY ITEMS:
1. Building Code Updates

Steve Westerhaus, Building Official

The State used to adopt a new building code every 3 years but recently moved to every 6 years. This new ordinance is an update to the current ordinance to reflect the new 2020 Minnesota State Building Code, which includes a number of books. The optional provisions would require any building that met the thresholds of square footage to add a sprinkler system if they were to add on.

Mayor Gustafson

Are there major changes to how buildings will need to be built, inspected, and remodeled after we adopt this?

Steve Westerhaus

No, things like stairways and railings that will remain the same. There are some smaller areas such as insulation standards and requirements for automatic light fixtures in new commercial buildings.

Mayor Gustafson

Is it the case that the code will be consistent to other communities?

Steve Westerhaus

That's correct, this will be consistent with all cities around the state. The full code and books are on the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry website.

2. Amber Union Project Updates
 - Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
 - Website Updates

Sack Thongvanh

Staff has created a webpage on TIF as well as the Amber Union project. The next step will be to hold a public hearing on March 10 prior to the creation of the TIF district. The City will be issuing a pay as you go note for the developer. The developer is now looking at 50 percent AMI so there was a gap in funding that TIF will close.

After the public hearing on March 10, the City can issue building permits. The plans have been submitted and currently we are working with the developer on details.

Once we adopt the TIF district, Ehlers will request certification of the TIF district with Ramsey County. Ehlers and the developer will be at the public hearing next week for any questions that residents or Council has.

Council Member Leehy

Do you expect that on March 11, the permit will be approved and breaking ground will happen?

Administrator Thongvanh

It will happen sometime after that as we still have to do the preconstruction meeting so that we can be on the same page on expectations. Hopefully we will be able to complete the parking lot part of the work done before the City's street project begins.

Mayor Gustafson

I like how the website is coming together with the information, it looks good.

3. CARES Funding – Enhancement Program

Administrator Thongvanh

Regarding the CARES funding, we've used some of the money for COVID-related expenses. Based on our auditor's recommendation, we've allocated our funds through public safety. This means that the dollars the City received via the CARES act were moved to the general fund and now we have more flexibility in our timeline for determining what uses we would like them to go to.

We have received some requests from nonprofits including the Como Block Nurse Program and Northeast Youth and Family Services (NYFS). I've received requests to use funding for residential housing but if we are going to go that route, I would like to make the policy as broad as possible so that we do not have to collect as much personal data.

Council Member Miazga

What is the reasoning to not collect this data?

Administrator Thongvanh

There are certain regulations we would have to follow if we are collecting this data. It's a process, there are waivers.

Council Member Miazga

My two cents would be to use the funding for individuals who aren't connected to a larger organization.

Council Member Wehyee

As far as the data question, I wonder if the process wouldn't be similar to when we have license applications from individuals. Is the information on these applications different that we would need to gather for a program?

Council Member Leehy

The information we collect does not include residents' personal information on income, etc.

Administrator Thongvanh

We provide scholarships for our parks programming. We don't ask for very much data, we just rely on people to be honest. In the past we haven't had people abuse the program and I don't think they would with a COVID-related program.

Council Member Leehy

By removing the barrier of filling out forms to prove need, that helps eliminate the emotional drain that can sometimes be caused by social assistance programs. I don't think there are that many non-profits that are out there applying for support.

Mayor Gustafson

I did put in a research request to the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) to find out if there were any legal requirements for a direct payment program.

Administrator Thongvanh

As long as the city has a policy and procedure to administer the program, it would be acceptable. It would meet the requirements of public use with these items in place.

Council Member Andrews

I want to do something but administering a program like this is complicated and that concerns me.

Mayor Gustafson

If we require residency requirements we could make them similar to those required for voting.

Council Member Andrews

I wish there was a way we could give everyone in the city 'x' amount of dollars, and it would be up to them to waive it. I'm not opposed to a program like this but I feel like it's a can of worms.

Administrator Thongvanh

Do you all feel comfortable with allocating 50K to a COVID relief program and having a form to ask how the funds will be used? We can communicate it to residents. The remaining amount of COVID funding could be used for other projects that would otherwise require increased taxes. We will work on putting a program together and bring it back to Council the first week in April.

Council Member Wehyee

We established that 50K will go to this program but I don't think we discussed how the remaining funds would be used?

Mayor Gustafson

We have discussed about it going to other City projects such as the new park building that we know are planned expenses in the near future.

Administrator Thongvanh

Let's plan to have this as a policy item at the first meeting in April.

4. Police Service Updates

Administrator Thongvanh

I have talked to a number of communities, most have said they don't have the capacity or are not interested at this time. I have not yet received the letter from Sheriff Fletcher regarding the increased cost in our contract that he mentioned in September but I am still anticipating a letter. Even if I don't receive it, there is a provision in the contract that the City would be required to pay whatever is appropriate for providing services to the City.

I am in communication now with another agency, they stated that they are interested in providing police services to Falcon Heights. Right now, long term it's the most affordable but in the short term there is an increased cost. We will need to give notice to Ramsey County before April 1. I'm looking at hosting a second workshop in March because things will be moving quickly if this aligns.

5. Speed Limits

Administrator Thongvanh

There have been concerns with residents about traffic, most recently with requests for stop signs. The memo included in the packet discusses a reduction in speed limits on residential streets.

Council Member Leehy

If we decide to lower the speed limits, my preference is to just 25 not 20 because it gets confusing when traveling to different cities.

Mayor Gustafson

All the residential speed limits in Minneapolis and Saint Paul are 20, and I believe Saint Anthony is also moving in that direction. It would make sense coming out of Saint Paul to keep it consistent. I'm in favor of 20 for residential.

Council Member Andrews

People who don't live here don't always know where the boundaries are. It might be confusing going from 20 to 25.

Mayor Gustafson

Once other cities start to adopt, it will be easier because people get used to it.

6. Council Town Hall Meetings

Administrator Thongvanh

The Council Town Hall Meetings were established with the strategic planning effort. Due to COVID, we didn't have the capacity. Circling back to this, I'm looking at setting up some kind of event and would like Council input.

Council Member Leehy

My thought is that we have the Zoom event sometime within a month after our retreat. Then things will be fresh in our minds and we could even do a Q&A with residents. We could do break out sessions based on quadrants and assign council member in each quadrant.

Council Member Andrews

I like the idea of hosting this after the retreat. I'm not sure how effective the neighborhood piece would be. How would we prepare for that?

Administrator Thongvanh

We will have staff identify possible dates for this Zoom event.

7. Fire Equipment

Administrator Thongvanh

About 80 percent of the equipment is dated and would not be worth anything if the city wanted to sell it. I'm working on getting an appraisal for all the vehicles. If we do release the equipment, we are probably looking at a couple thousand dollars. We purchased the truck for about \$750K but its value is much less now. We are looking at donating equipment that is not up to standards in the US to other countries through an organization in Roseville.

I'm looking at storing equipment and Public Works vehicles in the garages once the fire equipment is gone. This will help alleviate storage costs in the future.

8. Committee Appointments

Administrator Thongvanh

Council liaison appointments for the four city commissions are discussed with the Mayor and the Mayor makes the appointments and the Council approves. In addition to commissions, there are working groups that are not officially sanctioned such groups tasked with working on the City logo and the City survey. We rotate council members among commissions so that they get exposure to the different projects.

Council Member Wehyee

That is mostly straightforward. It feels like the process with the inclusion subgroup wasn't followed because there was not notice that membership would be changing. I think giving council members the option to express whether they want to be on a working group is a good practice. That's what I was hoping would happen with respect to the appointment for the inclusion subgroup. I don't think it was communicated as well as it should have been. In terms of sustainability I think its important to allow others the chance to step in.

Council Member Leehy

When the other working groups were described, they were short term and once the end goal was accomplished they no longer existed. I am the person that called for this work group and I provide continuity in implementing the recommendations from 2016 and the five community conversations. I made a commitment to see these things through.

Administrator Thongvanh

Having some continuity on the workgroup is important because knowing what the City has done in the past with regard to inclusion and equity is really important.

Council Member Andrews

The inclusion workgroup is not a commission. Having been on the taskforce, I was personally amazed and very grateful for the time that Melanie and Randy put in.

E. INFORMATION/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Administrator Thongvanh

At the meeting next week, we will have a public hearing on the conduit bonding as well as the creation of the TIF district for Amber Union. I had a Parks Commission meeting this past week, we discussed the Community Park building. One of the requests was to establish a permanent ice rink there. The feedback we are hearing from the community is that they do want a park building. The logo rollout will be a soft rollout to keep costs reasonable.

Mayor Gustafson

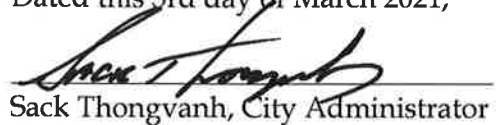
We received the report from NineNorth with some information about their operations. The Sheriff's Office is providing information to the community in advance of the Derek Chauvin trial.

F. ADJOURNMENT: 9:23 PM



Randall C. Gustafson, Mayor

Dated this 3rd day of March 2021,



Sack Thongvanh, City Administrator